

VSBPE Licensure Testimony
Tuesday, February 21, 2023
Provided by: Amy Minor & Ellen Emery

Good afternoon, and thank you for hearing our testimony today.

I am Amy Minor, Superintendent for the Colchester School District., Chair of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE) and the president-elect for the Vermont Superintendents Association.

I am Ellen Emery and I am a member of the Vermont Standards Board for Professional Educators (VSBPE); I chair the VSBPE Program Approval Committee. I am also the Director of the Teacher Apprenticeship Program, commonly known as the TAP Program at Champlain College.

Vermont is seeing an increase in the number of emergency or provisional licenses due to a lack of licensed applicants across the state. After consultation with our colleagues from the Agency of Education, and my own experience with the educator shortage challenges, the House Education Committee should consider the below recommendations as a means to assist with the educator workforce shortage.

Recommendations:

- Expanded loan forgiveness, grants, and scholarships for tuition. Consider stipends for student teaching.
- Affordable housing for out-of-state educators. The VSBPE issued 406 licenses through reciprocity in AY20/21.
- Funding to Vermont Education Preparatory Programs (EPPs) and districts to develop *grow your own programs*.

Retain Current Workforce:

We also want to acknowledge the importance of taking steps to retain the current workforce. Nationally, a metaphor is being used in conversations as the educator pipeline leading to a leaking bucket. Essentially, implying that the educator workforce shortage has two significant challenges: maintaining the current workforce and recruiting and training new teachers. Conditions in the field are hard, across the state we are seeing an increase in student behaviors, and we are constantly asking teachers and administrators to do more.

In order to maintain our current workforce, we ask that you consider the number of initiatives schools are asked to implement. Over time schools have been asked to do more for our students and oftentimes the additional tasks come with little to no funding, and no additional staff.

Potential Candidates:

I increasingly fear there are simply not enough people in Vermont with the training who want to become teachers in the state. To really meet the need, we are going to have to work to draw candidates from across the Northeast and beyond to Vermont (both to Vermont colleges for preparation and those trained outside of Vermont to come and teach here). This will require a coordinated recruitment strategy and a thoughtful advertising campaign. This will require people and funding to run.

What are the most common reasons for provisional or waiver requests?

There are three ways in which non-licensed teachers would be able to seek licensure. For more information, you can reference the [Temporary Licensure Guide](#) and the [VT Licensure Fee Schedule](#).

1. Emergency License - Emergency licenses and endorsements shall be issued only to individuals who hold a baccalaureate degree, but do not meet the qualifications for a Provisional License. Emergency licenses are only good for one year. Special Educator, School Counselor and Principal (and other similar endorsements) are not eligible for an Emergency license. Total Cost: \$100 (\$50 application fee and \$50 for one year of licensure)

Most common Emergency Licenses as of this month:

1. Elementary Ed (38)
2. PE (12)
3. Science (6)

For the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 113 Emergency Licenses have been issued.

2. Provisional License - This provides the applicant with a temporary license to teach and two years to complete the remaining requirements for licensure. Applicants must possess a baccalaureate degree, meet certain criteria (typically a major in the subject area in which they are seeking licensure) and they must submit a plan by which they will qualify for licensure within the two-year provisional period. An extension of one year may be allowed under extenuating circumstances. Total Cost: \$150 (\$50 application fee and \$100 for two years of licensure)

Most common Provisionals as of this month:

1. Special Education (197)
2. Elementary Education (173)
3. Early Childhood Ed (99)
4. School Counselor (50) (requires a MA in mental health-related field, or a teaching license)
5. Middle Grades ELA (48)
6. Principal (45)

For the 2022-2023 school year, a total of 1206 Provisionals have been issued.

3. Waiver Request - The majority of waivers are for additional one-year provisionals in Special Education, testing requirements, or an extension of the provisional licensure timeline.

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Educator Quality

The quality of educators in Vermont is a top priority for the Agency of Education and the VSBPE. If we expand access too far, I fear we are going to substantially impact the quality and preparation of candidates. This will lead to lower student achievement. If too many candidates take fast-track routes to the classroom, this is going to both impact student achievement and teacher retention. As a whole, educators with less preparation are less successful, and leave the field more quickly. In effect, we run the danger of exacerbating the shortage while simultaneously having lower levels of student

achievement. The VSBPE has proactively taken steps to to make the pathway to licensure more accessible while at the same time ensuring that educator quality is not compromised.

What has the VSBPE done to make the pathway to licensure more accessible:

- Created multiple options to meet the Praxis Core requirement including the use of the military's ASVAB assessment, and previous coursework. [ETS Praxis](#) is the company that oversees the testing program. [Fees](#) for these tests are paid by the applicant.
- Currently developing a policy for flexibility around Praxis II content tests following successful models from other states.
- Created flexibility around the 3.0 GPA requirement for candidates who demonstrate effective instruction during student teaching.
- Created flexibility for administrator candidates who have unlicensed teaching experience (e.g. worked in VT independent school).
- Expanded and streamlined reciprocity to all 50 states, including NY. Over 50% of initial licenses are issued to licensed out-of-state teachers.
- Provided guidance to Vermont Educator Preparatory Programs (EPPs) clarifying candidates can work for pay during their student-teaching under a provisional license or as a teaching assistant/paraeducator (Ellen speak to this at TAP)
- Approved VT HEC (Higher Ed Collaborative) for Initial licensure, which creates a new pathway for Early Childhood, Early Childhood Special Education, and K-12 Special Education with a focus on supporting paraeducators
- Created a temporary waiver for Special Education Provisionals for applicants who would not normally qualify (requires Praxis II, participation in AOE mentoring program, IRIS Modules through Vanderbilt University ([example 1](#) of 12), and enrollment in EPP). 50+ educators currently licensed
- Approved a course sequence for licensure through NVU to support educators under the above waiver. This sequence also serves as a pilot for other EPPs to learn from in their development of similar pathways.

Vermont Educator Preparatory Programs (EPP)

In Vermont, students have several strong Educator Preparatory Programs to choose from. Castleton, Champlain College, Goddard, Middlebury, Norwich, Northern Vermont University, St. Michael's College, the University of Vermont and Vermont Technical College (CTTEP). Other programs include SPARK, TAP, Vermont Higher Ed Collaborative and VT AOE Peer Review Process.

Are there any other alternative pathways to licensure?

Teacher Apprenticeship Program (TAP) -provides an alternative route to a Vermont teaching license through an eight-month intensive, accelerated, experiential teacher preparation program in Vermont Schools. TAP attracts candidates with a degree in the area they want to teach and supports most 5-12 endorsements and PK-12 specials like art, PE and music. The TAP program has had approximately fifty requests from VT principals and department chairs to help fill teaching vacancies

at VT schools in the past year. Even with the need, the number of individuals who enroll in the TAP is down. This year, 16/32 candidates have already been hired on provisional licenses. Cost: \$12,000

Peer Review -Peer Review was never intended to be a robust program to support new educators. Peer Review was designed as a program to assist individuals with previous life and work experience to obtain a Vermont educator license. The VT NEA is helping peer review candidates with their GrowVT-ED Academy as well. For more information please refer to the [Peer Review page](#) on the AOE website. In most years, Peer Review recommends about 80 educators a year for licensure, the second most endorsements of any Vermont pathway to licensure after UVM. Cost: \$1,200

Most common endorsements sought through Peer Review:

- Early Education Teacher 20%
- Elementary Education 14%
- Special Educator 8.6%
- Science 6.6%
- Physical Education 5%

Total enrollment in Peer Review is currently 296 individuals. The AOE expects fewer than 50% of these individuals to submit a portfolio.